

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer.

During the course of the day, there was brought to the attention of the Members of the Senate a resolution regarding the situation in the Middle East. It was my understanding this resolution would be brought to the Senate tonight and that presumably it would be agreed to by the Senate.

My concern is that there are certain additional matters which should be included. If the Senate is going to exercise the important act of bringing this up, seeking unanimous consent, and the message goes out all over the world that the Senate has spoken, I would support what is in this resolution. I believe now that is not going to take place tonight for various reasons.

It is imperative that I address what was to have taken place, what I was told was to have taken place, assuming the unanimous consent could be achieved on both sides.

No. 1, this matter is so important, it deserves an opportunity for a number of Senators to speak on a resolution of this import. I am now advised by our cloakroom that it will not be taken up tonight, but I will take this opportunity to address parts of it or at least one part that I think should bear further careful drafting and possibly be changed. Otherwise, it is only one section, on page 3, item 3, which says:

(3) urges the President to continue fully supporting Israel as Israel exercises its right of self-defense in Lebanon and Gaza;

There is no question about their right of self-defense against Hezbollah and Hamas, but I wondered whether we should draft it in this way.

I urge those, since we are not going to take it up tonight, to make sure there is not an ambiguity there because the people of Lebanon are suffering enormously at this time, as are the people in Gaza. Many of those people are not aligned with either Hezbollah or Hamas.

I am also concerned about the Government in Lebanon and the actions which are taking place now, what do we do if that Government were to fall.

I would vote for this resolution if it were brought up tonight. I would have addressed the Senate and brought up other matters which I will now discuss.

I turn now again to the fact that this is so important, it deserves the consideration of every Senator and a debate of some length. I don't know about the schedule of the Senate, but if we are going to go forward and send a message to the world about our position in the Senate with respect to the conflicts in Palestine, Lebanon, and Israel, and the suffering that is taking place on all borders, each side of the various borders, then it deserves very careful consideration.

The purpose of me taking the floor is to point out some areas which deserve full consideration in that debate which are not included. I don't criticize the drafter of this resolution, but it requires the consideration of the whole Senate rather than a unanimous consent with a number of Senators who may not be here tonight.

In the course of that debate, I urge a larger focus. For example, there is no mention in the resolution of some perhaps 25,000 Americans who are trapped or engulfed in one way in this conflict. How best do we address this conflict to help protect those 25,000 persons? That is an essential part of this debate.

Second, I said the following on Friday night in response to a press inquiry when I first learned of this conflict:

While I fully recognize that Israel was a victim of provocative attacks on her people and sovereignty, I urge the Administration to think through very carefully how Israel's extraordinary reaction could affect our operations in Iraq and our joint diplomatic efforts to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue.

This is a very critical time for the United States in the Middle East, and the Israeli actions will certainly have an impact beyond just Lebanon and Gaza.

I stand by that statement. That is why I urge, and I am pleased to say this resolution, at such time as it would be brought up, will be broadened to cover the other points.

First, are the 25,000 Americans trapped? Second, this Nation has made a very great sacrifice to achieve goals established by our President and a coalition of forces associated with our country in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Over 2,500 have lost their lives in Iraq; over 300 have lost their lives in Afghanistan. That is U.S. forces. Our coalition partners have lost. We have 20,000-plus wounded, many severely wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. And \$436 billion is a rough calculation of just a part, not all, but a significant part of the investment of our country in achieving our goals in those nations, of stabilizing their governments now with free elections in both countries and hopefully enabling those governments to gain the strength to provide for the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan, a measure of liberty and freedom and possibly democracy which we enjoy here and in other nations.

What is the effect of any statement made by the Senate? What is the effect on that very fragile situation in both countries? There is a resurgence in Afghanistan. I was just there a short time ago—and each of us have followed the

news to date—a resurgence in the fighting. NATO has come in.

We cannot just address one portion of the Middle East conflict without seeing how the manner in which we address that could affect the other areas, notably Afghanistan and Iraq.

So I say to my colleagues, as I said Friday night, we urge our President, our administration, as they take such, hopefully, bold and firm and convincing initiatives in regard to the conflicts in Israel and Gaza and Lebanon, to be mindful of how it could impact on our conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and our negotiations thus far with Iran in participating with other nations—not unilaterally—to try to bring about some resolution of what many of us considered up until this conflict—and I am not sure how we are going to eventually characterize the magnitude and the future potential spreading of this conflict—but certainly up until this conflict, in my judgment, the potential of Iran gaining nuclear weapons was absolutely—there was nothing more serious, in my judgment, than to try to resolve that.

There is no reference in here to the other Arab nations. It is quite interesting; some of those nations have come forward in strong condemnation, joined our country, joined other nations, in condemning Hamas and Hezbollah. That is of importance.

Now we see today that so many nations say the United States must take a stronger role in trying to work our way through this conflict, yes, supporting Israel but at the same time trying to bring about some resolution to spare the life and limb and suffering in Palestine, Lebanon, and Israel, to see that it not spread to other areas.

Now, our President has indicated that the Secretary of State will soon embark on a mission. What we say in the Senate must be carefully drafted so it does not remove the flexibility that our Secretary of State—a very able person—will need in helping to resolve this problem.

So I say that historically this Nation has stood steadfast, and I am proud that I have been among those in this Chamber in my 28 years here, to strongly support Israel. Our Nation is viewed upon as an honest broker—recognizing our support of Israel but as an honest broker. If the world is going to look to us as to how we can provide that leadership, I do not want any loss of flexibility on the part of the President and the Secretary of State and such others who may be tasked to try to work out this situation.

Yes, I conclude our support for Israel is very strong, Mr. President, but it cannot be unconditional.

I yield the floor.